

Trotsky and His Project, Self Revealed

OUR REVOLUTION, which comprises the political writings of Leon Trotsky for twelve years prior to the Russian revolution down to the date of the overthrow of the autocracy, gives us not only a vision of the revolution in its formative stage, but—through the clarity of his political vision—a glimpse of the man himself.

In the biographical notes which preface *Our Revolution* Trotsky is summed up as alert, aggressive, white hot; vibrating that mental passion which always characterizes the intellectual Jew; and it is in this racial characterization, as an intellectual Jew—to which should be added the influence of a Russian environment—that we, perhaps, get the keynote to the man.

Trotsky, the Knower.

After centuries of persecution, continued in Russia to this day in constantly recurring pogroms, it is a wonder that the men of Trotsky's race should have survived as a coherent entity. The goyim have indeed been ungrateful. Consider the world's attitude—and especially Russia's attitude—toward the Jew, in the light of the astounding paradox in Disraeli's glowing sarcasm: "One-half of the civilized world worships a Jew and the other half a Jewess."

It is this world attitude toward the Jew that has developed in the race to such a marked degree their chief characteristic, cunning. We are not using the word in its narrow sense, but rather as applied by Carlyle, from the same root as *konig* or *king*—the knowing man. The word fits Trotsky well, for it was this same Jewish inheritance of cunning which made him *konig* or *king de facto*, if not by nomination, of the Russian revolution.

Single of Purpose.

This trait is emphasized in the intense power of concentration, and the acute singleness of purpose in the man: "even in his quietest moments he resembles a spring." Trotsky envisages both himself and the revolution when he depicts a nation "gathered into one compact whole, as a lion ready to leap."

Trotsky's plan for the revolution owed both its strength and its weakness to his power for concentration, and to his narrowness of vision. He saw with a single eye, a single idea, and rejecting all compromise, all middle of the road opportunism; by sheer force of direct and narrow purpose he succeeded in executing his plan, where, perhaps, bigger and broader men would have failed.

It was not a democracy that Trotsky aimed to establish in Russia, and through Russia to impose on the world. The idea of a government of the people, by the people and for the people he rejected as giving the bourgeoisie an opportunity to exploit the workers. Early in life supersaturated in Marxism, Trotsky had come to believe that man's only hope for political emancipation lay, not in a republic, but in a labor dictatorship—and that despite the fact that the proletariat or urban working class in Russia are, as a class, numerically small compared with the peasants, and are, mentally, on a much lower plane than the middle and professional classes.

The Russian Middle Class.

Trotsky finds the middle class bourgeoisie in Russia "steeped in prejudices, stunned by the clatter of events, exploiting and being exploited, greedy and helpless in their greed," and altogether unfitted for leadership in the world movement. "Still less were the peasants capable of political initiative. Scattered over the country far from the nervous centres of politics and culture, limited in their views, the peasants could have no great part in the struggles for the new order."

Trotsky believed that in Russia "a backward country with a lesser degree of capitalistic development, the proletariat should sooner reach political supremacy than in a highly developed capitalistic state." He remarks that "in the far more advanced capitalistic centres of England and America the proletariat never was in power, even for a single day." America, Germany and England are then in a highly developed capitalistically to be able to overthrow the yoke; the way must be blazed by Russia, where the capitalistic bourgeoisie are weakly organized and the working classes are comparatively strong.

But he finds the participation of labor in a revolution inadmissible. Only in

the role of a leading dominant power. . . . When we speak of a labor government we mean that the hegemony belongs to the working classes."

His bitterness against the peasantry is accentuated by the fact that it was the sons of peasants in the army of the Czar, who overthrew the uprising of the proletariat in 1905.

Yet he is willing to effect a compromise, for the present, at least, but fears for the success of the labor dictatorship unless it is reflected by a similar uprising in Germany and other countries, and the Russian proletariat is able to call upon the more highly organized resources of the neighboring States to help them by force of arms to subdue the peasantry to the role of economic subservience he has assigned to them; otherwise, Trotsky foresees great danger to the revolution.

And when Trotsky foresees anything it

has almost uncanny significance for us. Twelve years ago the revolution was planned by Trotsky, in minutest detail. In a Russian jail he dreamed this dream, and wrote the essay—included in this volume—on *Prospects of a Labor Dictatorship*, wherein he sets forth the whole course of the Russian revolution as it has unfolded before us in the last few months.

So explicit are his directions as to what should take place, so accurately does he envisage the actual happenings of to-day, that in reading this essay, written twelve years ago, "one has the feeling . . . as if they were discussing problems of the present situation."

True, Trotsky has fallen. None the less the operation he set out to perform was "successful," although the ultimate recovery of the patient is problematical.

Trotsky's narrowness of vision did not enable him to see that what was possible

in Russia was most improbable in other countries. Precedents, to him, were blind alleys; they led nowhere. Throughout the essays he constantly reiterates: "History does not repeat itself."

The fact that a revolution has never occurred in a truly democratic country signified to him, if it signified at all, that Russia must light the way. He expected that even such advanced democracies as the United States and England would throw off the yoke of "bourgeoisie control," and join hands with the Russian proletariat the moment the labor dictatorship became a fact. His internationalism has failed where his narrower national vision secured a momentary but most overwhelming success.

The Man Himself.

Trotsky has been heralded as the long looked for Russian Messiah; he has been described as the malevolent, unscrupulous agent of pan-Germania; others would dismiss him as a pitiful, ridiculous figure—a charlatan, clown or buffoon.

But neither praise nor abuse is good argument. Trotsky's life, a singularly clean one, is an open book which, read with the record of his writings, shows that from the time he left the university to plunge into the maelstrom of revolutionary politics he has steered a straight course.

A brilliant scholar, a forceful writer and dynamic orator; with his intense power of concentration he might easily have achieved fame and amassed wealth, as so many of his compatriots have done. It was no "primrose path of dalliance" that he chose to tread, but the hard road of poverty and hard work, varied only by enforced "vacations" behind prison walls.

Doubtless his course was influenced by the many centuries of oppression his race has suffered. But it was not to avenge the race that Trotsky arose, but through the medium of the revolution to establish a labor dictatorship and emancipate mankind.

As the curtain descends upon what may be the last act of the grim tragedy of the revolution and Trotsky steps out of the spotlight into the darkness of the Russian night we earnestly commend this volume of the collected revolutionary writings of Leon Trotsky to those who would know something of the man and of the revolution he planned.

OUR REVOLUTION. Essays on Working Class and International Revolution (1904-1917). By LEON TROTSKY. Translated by M. J. Ogin. Henry Holt & Co. \$1.50.

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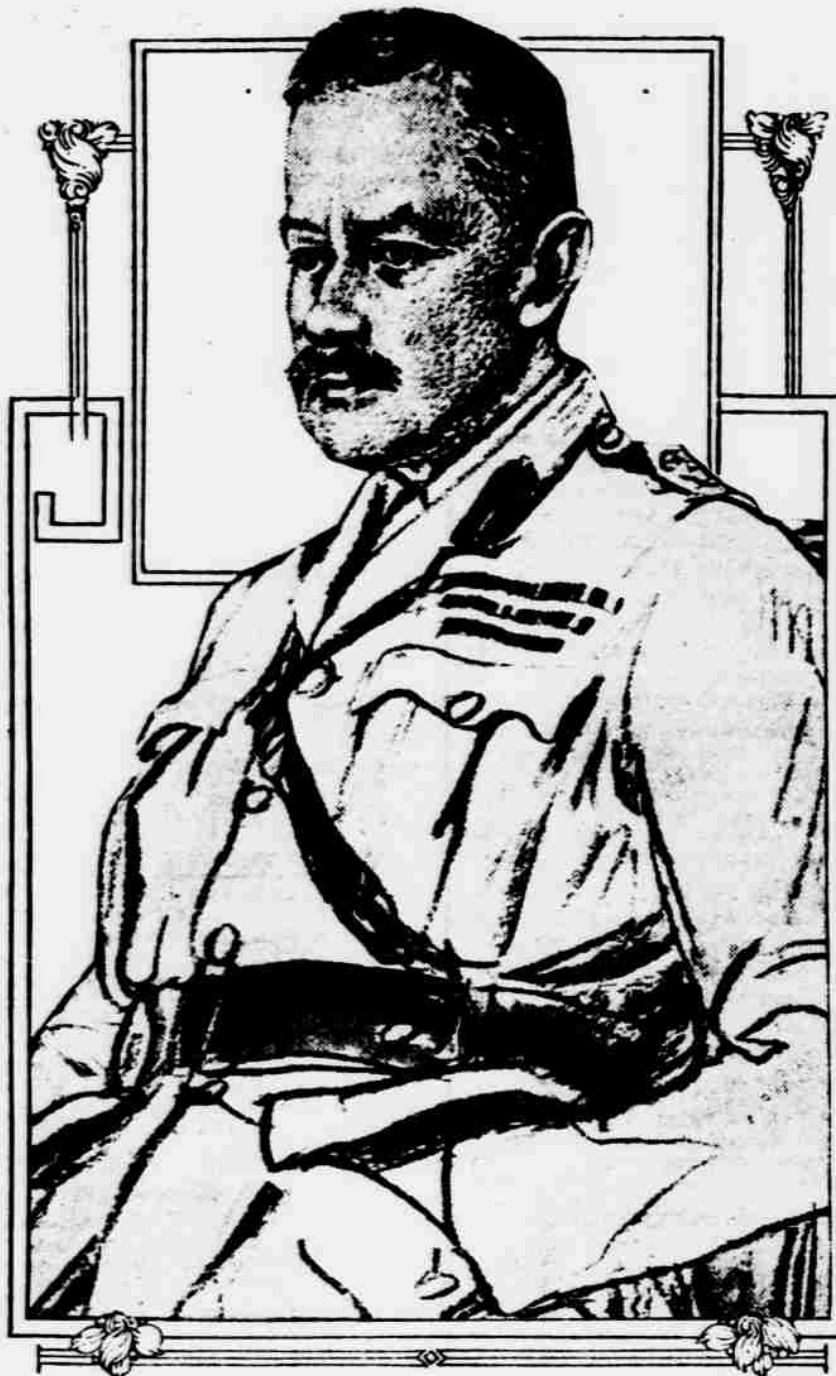
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